

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9797

S E C R E T KINSHASA 4998

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E.O. 11652: X-GDS ADS 31 DEC 1984

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CASC CG

SUBJECT: SHABA ATTACK - FRENCH UNILATERAL PARACHUTE OPERATION

REF: KINSHASA 4993

1. AT 2115Z MAY 18 GENERAL BABIA CALLED IN FRENCH, BELGIAN AND US MILITARY MISSION CHIEFS TO INFORM US THAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAD GIVEN-GO-AHEAD TO LAUNCH THE FRENCH 2ND REP (REGIMENT ETRANGER PARACHUTIST) AT DAWN 19 MAY 78.

2. BABIA GAVE THE FOLLOWING RATIONALE FOR THIS DECISION:

A) PRIORITY CONCERN IS THE SAFETY OF THE EXPATRIATE POPULATION HELD HOSTAGE IN KOLWEZI.

B) ELEMNTN OF SUPRISE WOULD BE LOST SINCE EUROPEAN PRESS HAS BEEN COMMENTING ON OPERATIONAL PLANS IN DETAIL.

C) MESSAGE FROM MBUMBA INTERCEPTED LATE TODAY FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS

IN ANGOLA WHICH INSTRUCTS REBELS TO KILL EXPATRIATES IN KOLWEZI AREA 19 MAY.

3. COL. GRAS, FRENCH MILITARY MISSION CHIEF WAS REQUESTED BY BABIA TO GIVE DETAILS. GRAS STATED AT 1515Z 18 MAY BABA RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM JOURNIAC WHO STATED PRESIDENT GISCARD'S DESIRE THAT THE OPERATION TAKE PLACE MAY 19 PROVIDED KOLWEZI

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AIRFIELD WAS IN FAZ HANDS. BABIA ASSURED JOURNIAC THAT GOZ CONTROLLED AIRFIELD POINTING OUT THAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAD LANDED THERE IN A C-130 EARLIER IN THE DAY. GRAS DISAGREED WITH GISCARD, SAYING THEY SHOULD PROCEED PLANNING JOINTLY WITH THE BELGIANS FOR A 20 MAY ASSAULT. UPON RECEIVING MBUMBA'S INTERCEPT MESSAGE (MENTIONED ABOVE) GRAS DECIDED THAT FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS RESCUE

OPERATIONS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GREAT RISKS ARE INVOLVED.

3. DETAILED OPERATION PLANNING IS CURRENTLY BEING CONDUCTED BY FRENCH/FAZ. GENERAL CONCEPT OF FRENCH OPERATION IS TO TRANSFER THE TROOPS FROM AIRCRAFT MENTIONED IN REFTEL TO FIVE FAZA C-130 AIRCRAFT AND THREE FRENCH TRANSALLS AFTER QUICK OPERATIONAL BRIEFING OF GROUND COMMANDERS. ONE FRENCH AIRCRAFT FERRYING APPROXIMATELY 200-250 TROOPS INTO N'DJILI AIRPORT WILL ARRIVE TOO LATE TO PARTICIPATE IN FIRST WAVE. THEY WILL DEBARK FROM FRENCH DC 8, CLIMB ABOARD AIR ZAIRE DC 10 FOR MOVEMENT TO KAMINA AIR BASE. FIRST WAVE OF APPROXIMATELY 500 TROOPERS IN FIVE C-130'S AND THREE TRANSALLS WILL DEPART N'DJILI AT 0430Z 19 MAY AND DROP INTO KOLWEZI AREA APPROXIMATELY 0730Z 19 MAY, WITH MISSION OF RAPIDLY MOVING INTO EUROPEANS SECTION OF CITY. FOUR C-130'S WILL THEN PROCEED TO KAMINA TO PICK UP AND DROP 2ND WAVE OF 200-250 TROOPERS EARLY AFTERNOON 19 MAY. GENERAL SINGHA, RECENTLY NAMED FAZ SHABA COMMANDER, PLUS THREE OF HIS STAFF OFFICERS WILL ACCOMPANY COL. GRAS IN A FRENCH TRANSALL. AFTER DROPPING TROOPS THIS TRANSALL WILL BECOME AIRBORNE COMMAND POST. BY AFTERNOON OF 19 MAY 2ND REP SHOULD HAVE SOME 750 TROOPERS ON THE GROUND.

4. COL GRAS ASKED COL BLEUS, THE BELGIAN MILITARY MISSION CHIEF, IF HIS TROOPS OFF LOADING AT KAMINA IN ACCORDANCE WITH TIME TABLE IN REFTEL COULD PARTICIPATE IN THE OPERATION. COL BLEUS
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RESPONDED THAT HIS TROOPS WOULD NOT BE READY IN TIME. BLEUS SAID HE WOULD PREPARE OPERATION PLANS FOR BELGIAN PARATROOPS' PARTICIPATION AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, EXECUTION ORDER WILL BE GIVEN BY GOB BRUSSELS.

5. BLEUS ASKED GRAS HIS CONCEPT OF FUTURE OPERATIONS. GRAS RESPONDED THAT FRENCH TROOPS WILL SECURE EUROPEAN SECTION DURING FIRST PHASE. THEY WILL THEN USE FAZ TROOPS TO CLEAR AND SECURE OUTLYING AFRICAN SECTIONS IN LATE PHASE.

6. GRAS ASKED BLEUS IF THE BELGIAN TROOPS COULD DROP ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF KOLWEZI WITH THE MISSION OF BLOCKING ENEMY ROUTES OF ESCAPE. BLEUS RESPONDED THAT THE BELGIAN MISSION WAS STRICTLY HUMANITARIAN. GENERAL SINGHA POINTED OUT THAT THE REBELS HAVE SEIZED MANY GECAMINES TRUCKS AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY TAKE WITH THEM EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL. HE CONSIDERED THE MISSION OF BLOCKING ENEMY ESCAPE ROUTES WITHIN THE HUMANITARIAN FRAMEWORK. BLEUS AGREED LATER POINT AND AGAIN SAID HE WOULD PREPARE OPERATIONAL PLANS BUT THE EXECUTION ORDER MUST COME FROM BRUSSELS.

7. BABIA QUERIED GENERAL KIKUNDA, FAZA CHIEF OF STAFF ON HIS

ABILITY TO SUPPORT THE FRENCH AIRBORNE OPERATION TO INCLUDE REFUELING

AT KAMINA BASE. KIKUNDA SAID HE SAW NO PROBLEM. KIKUNDA ASKED CHIEF

ZAMISH WHEN US REFUEL CAPABILITY WILL BE OPERATIONAL AT KAMINA.

CHIEF ZAMISH RESPONDED THAT HE ESTIMATED NO EARLIER THAN 1600Z

19 MAY.

8. MEETING TERMINATED AT 2230Z.

9. DEPARTMENT PLEASE DETERMINE DISTRIBUTION.

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